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A

SERMON

Preached at

SUDBURY, *Nov.* 18, 1729.

Occasioned by the

SETTLEMENT

Of the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN FORD,

AS

PASTOR to the Congregation of
Protestant Dissenters in that Town.

By T. STEWARD, V.D.M.

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MEMORANDUM

FOR THE RECORD

OF THE

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T O M Y

Reverend Brethren,
and *Christian Friends*, that
were the Auditors of the
following Sermon.

Reverend Brethren, and much valued
Friends;

I Can truly say, that I com-
posed and delivered this
plain Discourse, with-
out the least Thought or
Design of its being made
more publick than by Preaching; and
that it was not without very great Re-
luctance, I was prevailed with to have
it transcribed for the Press. But your
Importunity was such as would not be
resisted, judging that there were some
Things in it, which might be of Use both

iv DEDICATION.

to Ministers and People: And tho' I could not then, nor can still, think it worthy of a Publication, being one of the least labour'd of any of my poor Performances of this Kind, hastily put together, as the Straits of Time would allow; yet I have suffered my self to be over-ruled, and submit my own to your superior Judgments, and heartily wish that it may any Way answer the Expectations you seem to conceive from it; which if it does, I shall have Reason to be very thankful to God, for prospering so mean a Performance, and shewing most of His Power, where there was least of human Art or Contrivance. Thus committing it, and my Self, to His Blessing, and to your Prayers; I conclude, and subscribe my Self,

Your affectionate

(tho' very unworthy) Brother,

And obedient humble Servant,

THOMAS STEWARD.



I THESS. V. 12, 13.

And we beseech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake. And be at Peace among your selves.



Will not take up any of the Time allotted to this Exercise, in making any Reflections upon the Context; but shall immediately apply my self to the Consideration of the *Words* which I have read to you, and which carry in them a manifest Suitableness to the present *Occasion*.

The Text is an *Apostolical Exhortation*, which hath the *Force* of a Command, though the *Form* of an Entreaty: What the Apostle might have had the Boldness

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ness to *enjoin* them, that he hath the Humility to *beseech* them to do. The *Object* of the Exhortation, or the *Persons* to whom it is directed, are particularly and immediately the Christians at *Thessalonica*; under them, generally all Christians, that enjoy a Gospel Ministry, who are related each to other, and all to the Ministers of the Gospel too, under the common Notion of Christianity, by the Bond of Brotherhood: *We beseech you Brethren.* The *Matter* of the Exhortation is a double Duty: *First*, the *Duty* of People towards their *Pastors*, who are here described by their *Work*; such as *labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you*: The People's *Duty* towards them, is, *to know them, and to esteem them very highly in Love, for their Work's sake.* Then, *Secondly*, here is the *Duty* of the People *one towards another*, and that is, *to be at Peace among themselves.*

I begin with the *First* of these; the *Duty* of *People* towards their *Pastors*; which is express'd in the 12th, and Part of the 13th Verse; *We beseech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake*: By those Phrases, *them which labour among you, and*
are

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are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, the *Apostle* describes the *Ministers* of the *Gospel*, who are the Object of the Duty here enjoined upon the People; and the Terms made use of, in this Description of Ministers, are very emphatical and significative, and serve as so many Motives to the People's Duty, of *knowing them*, and *esteeming them highly in Love*. Let me open these *Terms* a little, before I proceed to the particular Consideration of the Duty, which the People are here exhorted to.

Ministers are,

First, Such as *labour* among the *People* committed to their Care. The original Word is of a very intense Signification, as the Learned have observed. *Κοπιᾶω* (the Participle of which is here used) signifies, *laborare ad defatigationem usque*, to labour even unto Weariness, to take the utmost Pains, and strain every Vein (as we commonly speak.) The Labour of Ministers is very painful Labour; it spends the Spirits, and preys upon the Vitals. *Labores ecclesiastici succum exhauriunt ab imis medullis, senium mortemque accelerant*, says *Luther*. Ministerial Labours exhaust the very Marrow from the Bones, hasten Old Age and Death. The Labour of the Head and Mind, is
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greater than that of the Hand or Body. This is the first Thing, whereby *Ministers* are described; they are such as labour among the *People*. And,

Secondly, They are here said to be *over them in the Lord*. This speaks the Superintendency and Presidency of Elders or Ministers over their respective Flocks; they are to *rule*, as well as *labour*; *Discipline*, as well as *Doctrine*, is committed to them; But this Government is, *ἐν κυρίῳ*, in the Lord, in the Name and Authority of *Christ*, by Commission from him, and in such Matters as do immediately respect his Honour and Glory, and the Salvation of those Souls, which he has purchased with his *precious Blood*.

Thirdly, *Ministers* are here described as the *Monitors* of the People; they are over them in the Lord, and *admonish them*; warn them of their Danger; mind them of their Duty; instruct them when they are ignorant; reprove them when they do amiss; reduce them when they go astray; quicken them when dull; confirm them when wavering; resolve them when doubtful; comfort them when sad, &c. Thus we have here both the Dignity and the Duty of Ministers; their Dignity, they are over their People *in the Lord*; their Duty of Painfulness in their Calling, they

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they must *labour among their People*; and of Faithfulness to their People, they are to *admonish them*. Thus much I thought expedient to hint concerning the *Object* of the Duty here exhorted to.

I proceed now to that which I more principally intend to consider; to wit, the *Duty it self*; the *Acts* which the People are to perform towards their Ministers, namely, to *know them*, and to *esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake*. The latter doth expound the former: People must *know* their Ministers, so as to *honour, esteem, and love them*. Words of Knowledge in Scripture do ordinarily connote Approbation, Estimation, and Affection. The Word ὑπερβαίνειν, which we translate, *very highly*, is greatly emphatical, and can scarce be well render'd into our Language; it imports Esteem and Love, to an *Hyperbole* (as one expresses it) or a super-abounding Love and Esteem.

'Tis the Duty of People to have a most precious, honourable, affectionate Account of, or Respect for their Pastors, those who *labour among* and are *over them in the Lord, and admonish them*. This you may take as the *Observation, or Point of Doctrine*, arising from that Part of

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the

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the Text which I am now upon. That this is so, is very evident, not only from the *Text*, but also from several other parallel Scriptures. The Apostle writing to the *Philippians* concerning *Epaphroditus*, exhorts them to *receive him with all Gladness, and to hold such in Reputation*^a. Τὰς τοιαύτας ἐνλίμους ἔχετε, make much of such; make much Account of them; let them be dear and precious to you; have them in high Honour and Estimation. So again, *Let the Elders that rule well, be accounted worthy of double Honour*^b, i. e. very great or abundant Honour.

In the Prosecution of this Point, I shall endeavour to shew you briefly, What that Honour is which People owe to their Ministers; and give you a few Reasons, why the People should so highly esteem their Ministers; and then make a short Application, as the Time will permit.

I. Then, I am to shew you, what is implied in that honourable Esteem which People owe to their Ministers. I shall express this briefly in the following Particulars.

^a Phil. ii. 29.

^b 1 Tim. v. 17.

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1st. It implies a *reverential Acknowledging* of them as the Ministers of *Jesus Christ*, commissioned by him to the Office and Work of the Ministry, cloathed with Authority to act in his Name, as his Ambassadors, his Messengers and Representatives. Says the *Apostle*, *Let a Man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God^c*. And, *Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye reconciled to God^d*. Ministers have their Commission and Instructions from *Christ*, the great Lord and King of his Church; they speak in *his* Name; they act in *his* Stead; they do *his* Work; they negotiate for *him* with the Souls of Men; they are employ'd in the great Affairs of *his* spiritual Kingdom; and being so, a reverential Regard is due to them.

2^{dly}. The Respect which People owe to their Ministers, implies a *cordial Love* to them for their *Work's sake*; which is to watch for the Souls of their People, to win Souls to *Christ*, to guide them in the Ways of *Christ*, and bring them to the Enjoyment of *Christ*. This Duty of Love

^c 1 Cor. iv. 1.

^d 2 Cor. v. 20.

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from the People to their Pastors, is particularly mentioned in my Text; where the People are exhorted to *know*, and *esteem* their Ministers *very highly in Love*; and that, *for their Work's sake*: 'Tis their *Work*, in Obedience to the Command of *Christ*, and out of Pity and Compassion to your Souls, to pray, read, study, and preach for you; to spend and to be spent for your sakes; to instruct, exhort, admonish, counsel, and comfort you: They are Fathers and Nurses in a spiritual Sense; and being such, you do owe a dear and tender Affection to them. Such was the Love that the *Galatians* bore towards the *Apostle Paul*, that he says, *I bear you Record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own Eyes, and have given them to me*.*

3dly. A thankful and chearful Acceptance of them, as a singular Mercy and Gift of *God*, is another Thing included in the Honour and Esteem, which People owe their Ministers. *God's* faithful Ministers are a valuable Gift of *God* to the People, a Gift whereof they have the greatest Need, and by which they reap the greatest Benefit; and therefore, it is

* Gal. iv. 15.

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the People's Duty to receive and own them as such; to value them highly, love them dearly, and be very thankful for them. God says, *I will give you Pastors according to my Heart, which shall feed you with Knowledge and Understanding*^f. Ministers are some of the precious Ascension Gifts of our exalted Redeemer: *Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts unto Men*^g. And what these Gifts are, we are told, *He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers*^h: And he gave them to very excellent Ends and Purposes; to wit, *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*ⁱ; as it follows. And Ministers being thus eminently the Gift of God, for such excellent Ends; it must needs be the People's Duty to receive them accordingly, with Thankfulness to God, and Love to them.

4thly. Diligent Attendance upon their sacred Ministrations, is included in the Honour and Esteem due from People to their Ministers. You must think them worthy to be heard; you must account that

^f Jer. iii. 15. ^g Ephes. iv. 8. ^h Ver. 11. ⁱ Ver. 12.

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Time well improved, which is spent in hearing them speak *for you* to God, and speak *from God* to you. You should not neglect any Opportunity of attending upon the Ordinances of *Christ*, dispensed to you by those whom he sets over you. 'Tis a great Discouragement to Ministers, when People are backward in coming to the *House of God*, or do at any Time unnecessarily absent themselves from the *Publick Worship of God*: This is displeasing to him, and carries in it a Slight and Disrespect to those whom he sends on the most important Errand.

5thly. Another Thing implied in that Knowledge and honourable affectionate Esteem of their Ministers, which People are exhorted to have, and to express, is, Obedience to those Instructions and Directions, which they give them from the *Word of God*, for the Regulation of their Lives and Conversations. This indeed is the chief Part of that Honour which People owe to Ministers; for this shews, this proves, that they do acknowledge them as *Christ's Ministers*: This is the great Encouragement and Joy of Ministers, to see their People *walking in the Truth*, living according to the Rules of the Gospel, practising what they hear,
and

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and improving in Grace and Vertue: This indeed is an Honour done, not so much to Ministers, as to him by whom they are sent, in whose Honour they esteem themselves honoured after the best Manner; for they seek not their *own* Honour and Glory, in a Way of Distinction from, much less in a Way of Opposition to *his*.

6thly. Submission to their Government, or to the Discipline which they exercise according to the *Word* and *Will* of *Christ*, is also a Part of that Respect which People owe to their Ministers. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves: For they watch for your Souls, as they that must give an Account; that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief^k: Submit your selves, i. e. submit to the pastoral Inspection, Admonition, Reprehension, &c. of them, whom God has constituted your Overseers.*

7thly, and lastly. Provision for the honourable and comfortable Support and Maintenance of Ministers, is another Part of that Respect, Esteem, and Duty, which is owing to them from the People. That of the *Apostle* is very plain in this Case;

^k Heb. xiii. 17.

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Do ye not know that they which minister about holy Things, live of the Things of the Temple? And they which wait at the Altar, are Partakers with the Altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel^l. And this is what some understand, as a Part of the double Honour, in that fore-mentioned Place; Let the Elders that rule well, be accounted worthy of double Honour^m, i. e. as some take it, the Honour of Reverence, and the Honour of Maintenance. So again, Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good Thingsⁿ. And this is not Charity, but strict Justice and plain Duty. When our blessed Lord sent out the Twelve to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, he said to them, Provide neither Gold, nor Silver, nor Brass, in your Purses: Nor Scrip for your Journey, neither two Coats, neither Shoes, nor yet Staves: For the Workman is worthy of his Meat^o, i. e. Convenient Maintenance, which yet (as one well observes upon the Place) is so inconsiderable and unproportionable a Recompence, that notwithstanding this, they are said to bestow

^l 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. ^m 1 Tim. v. 17. ⁿ Gal. vi. 6.
^o Mat. x. 9, 10.

their

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their Pains freely; *Freely ye have received, freely give*^p. And says the *Apostle*; *If we have sown unto you spiritual Things; is it a great Thing if we shall reap your carnal Things*^q?

II. I proceed now to the second Thing in the propounded Method; namely, to give you a few Reasons, why the People do owe, and should pay, such Respect unto their Ministers.

1st. Because of the Relation they bear to *Christ*. This should commend them to their People; they are his Servants and Ministers; if you do not honour them, you reflect a Dishonour upon him. *He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me*^r. So, *He that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God*^r. An Indignity done to an Ambassador, reflects Dishonour upon the Prince that sends him.

2^{dly}. The real Worth that is in Ministers, should commend them to their People. The Gifts which God doth intrust and furnish them with, are truly valuable: Knowledge and Learning (especially that which is spiritual and divine) is ho-

^p Mat. x. 8.
^t 1 Thess. iv. 8.

^q 1 Cor. ix. 11.

^r Luke x. 16.

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nourable and excellent, and doth command and challenge Respect. None despise Knowledge but the Ignorant.

3dly. God himself has a gracious Respect to his Ministers; he esteems and values them; they are great in the Sight of the Lord, how mean and vile soever they are in themselves, or in their own Eyes, or in the Eyes of such as have no Esteem for real Worth. Kings have been reprov'd for their sakes; *He suffered no Man to do them Wrong; yea, he reprov'd Kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine Anointed, and do my Prophets no Harm.* Misusing them was a great Provocation to him; *They mocked the Messengers of God, and despised his Words, and misused his Prophets, until the Wrath of the Lord arose against his People, till there was no Remedy.*

4thly. The Work they are employ'd about, is honourable Work: 'Tis a Co-working with God and Christ, in that most glorious Undertaking, the Salvation of Souls. Their Work is to oppose the Devil and his Kingdom; to beat down Sin; to advance the Kingdom of Christ; to recover lost Souls; to dispense God's holy

[†] Psal. cv. 14, 15.

[‡] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

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Ordinances, &c. Most honourable Employment!

5thly. 'Tis very conducive, if not absolutely necessary to People's profiting by the Word, that they should esteem, value, and love those that dispense it. Our blessed *Lord Jesus Christ* did not many mighty Works in his own Country, where he was not honoured or respected as a Prophet sent from God; *Mat. xiii. 54. to the End.* Such as do contemptuously slight and disregard the Persons of *Christ's* Ministers, are not like to receive their Message, with that Reverence, Faith, and Love, which are necessary to their profiting thereby.

Thus much for the Explication and Confirmation of the first Point; let me now add a few Words of *Application*, both to Ministers, and People.

1. To Ministers; Let me say to you, my Reverend Brethren, *Suffer, I beseech you, the Words of Exhortation.* I do indeed even blush to think that I should undertake to be your *Monitor*; but seeing this Work has been committed to such a *Hand*, it is incumbent upon me to discharge it, in the best, and plainest, and most faithful Manner I can. Now, the Exhortation which I would direct

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to Ministers, is this, *That* they would study so to carry themselves, that they may deserve the Honour, the Estimation, and Affection, which the People are here required to give them, and that they may preserve their Interest therein; and to beware of doing any Thing that would weaken and impair, or destroy and ruin it. 'Tis possible for Ministers to forfeit that Respect, which is due to them while they behave themselves suitably to their Place and Office: Too many in this honourable Function, have been the Spots and Blemishes of their Calling and Profession, for which, God has made them *contemptible* and *base* before the People; as he did the corrupt and wicked Priests among the *Jews*. *Ye are departed out of the Way, ye have caused many to stumble at the Law: Ye have corrupted the Covenant of Levi; saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the People* v.

There are *four* Things especially, that render Ministers base and contemptible.

(1.) *Pride*, or an high Conceit of themselves, joined with a scorning and despising others, and arrogating more Power

v Mal. ii. 8, 9.

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to themselves, than they have by Commission from *Christ* ; or, using that Power which they have, imperiously, vauntingly, rigorously, and so trampling upon the People, or treating them in a domineering, rude, insulting Manner. Ministers ought indeed to maintain and keep up their just Authority among and over the People ; but they must beware of a haughty, insolent, supercilious Behaviour: for those that seek thus irregularly to exalt themselves, will certainly be debased.

(2.) *Idleness* is another Thing which will deprive Ministers of Esteem and Respect, and make them contemptible. He that neglects the Improvement of those Gifts, which *God* has given him, is worthy to be slighted and neglected himself. We must not expect the Honour of the Ministry, without the Labour. Loiterers, who study and consult nothing but their own Ease ; slothful Ministers, that do not improve their *Talent*, will lose it : The Gifts and Abilities of Ministers are honourable ; if we lose our Gifts by Idleness, we shall, with them, lose the Regard, Esteem, and Love of the People, and fall under deserved Neglect and Contempt.

(3.) *Sor-*

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(3.) *Sordid Avarice* debases a Minister of the Gospel. When Men take up this sacred Calling, as a worldly Trade, and use it accordingly; when they watch not for Mens Souls, but for their Estates; when they seek not *them*, but *their's*, they dishonour their Profession, and lose the Respect and Esteem of their People: Yet let me here add, that Ministers are not to be charged with Covetousness, when they only require their own just Right; and seek for no more of the World, than what is necessary to maintain themselves and Families, in such a Sort as becomes their Place and Office; and to enable them to discharge the Duties of their Calling, among which are Charity and Hospitality; and to provide themselves with the proper Instruments of their Calling; I mean, *Books*, which are not to be procured, but at considerable Expence and Charge: 'Tis but too evident, that these Things are not so well consider'd as they ought, by many People, who are ready to accuse their Ministers of Covetousness; when they have much greater Reason to charge themselves with the same Fault. But this by the way.

(4.) *Looseness of Life* utterly ruins the Reputation of a Minister: This is a great Blemish

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Blemish in any Professor, but still greater in a Preacher of the Gospel: When they, whose Work and Business it is, to press Holiness upon others, are themselves profane, and practise directly contrary to what they preach; they cannot with any Reason expect, that the People should esteem them any other-wise, than as *gross Hypocrites*, or vile *Impostors*: Even those that have a due Regard to their Doctrine, so far as it is agreeable with the Word of God, can have no Reverence for their Persons, but must needs account them to be, what indeed they are, the basest among Men.

These now are the Things, concerning which I must say to Ministers, as St. Paul said to *Timothy*, *O Man of God, flee these Things*^{*}: These are the Things which would deprive us of the Esteem and Affection of our People, and render us vile in their Eyes. On the other hand, there are *four* Things which will procure us due Respect.

[1.] *Humility*, or *Meekness*, and *Condescension* to the Meanest, using our Power and Authority with all Prudence and Tenderneſs. The *Apostle* says, *The Ser-*

^{*} 1 Tim. vi. 11.

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vant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves^y, &c.

[2.] *Painfulness and Diligence in our Work. The Apostle says to Timothy; Give Attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine. Neglect not the Gift that is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, with the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, Meditate upon these Things, give thy self wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all^z. Verbi Minister es: Hoc age. Thou art a Minister of the Word, mind it and make it thy Business, was the Motto of that pious Divine, Mr. Perkins, and is very fit to be the Motto of any Gospel Minister.*

[3.] *Faithfulness. When Ministers approve themselves to the Consciences of their People, that they unfeignedly seek their Souls Good; when they do not shun to declare to them, the whole Counsel of God; this must needs beget a suitable Esteem of them in the Minds of their People, and produce a suitable Affection for them.*

^y 2 Tim. ii. 24, to the End. ^z 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14, 15.

[4.] *Holi-*

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[4.] *Holiness of Life and Conversation.*

This carries a commanding Awe along with it; even natural Conscience does reverence it; of this we have an Instance in *Herod*, who feared John; knowing that he was a just Man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many Things, and heard him gladly^a.

The exemplary Holiness of Ministers will make even the Wicked fear them, much more will it cause the Godly to esteem and love them. Thus much by Way of Advice and Exhortation to *Ministers*.

2. Let me add a Word to the *People*. Think it not Pride or Folly in us; to mind you of the Duty you owe to the *Ministers of Christ*. 'Tis Part of God's Counsel, which we are to make known to you. The Apostle *Paul* does frequently insist upon this, in his Epistles. Let me say to you in particular of *this Society*: Has the Lord set over you one whom he hath called to the Work of the Ministry, and richly furnished with ministerial Gifts and Graces, with Humility, and Prudence; and Faithfulness, and Zeal, and Diligence; One that has a just Sense of the Weight of his Office, and the

^a Mark. vi. 20.

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Worth of precious Souls; One that is ready to *spend* and be *spent* in the Service of *Christ*, and for the promoting your spiritual and eternal Welfare? Take heed that you *despise* him *not*; but be very thankful to God for him; *know* him; *own* him; *esteem* him *very highly in Love*, for his *Work's sake*. God has provided for you (after some very discouraging Disappointments) even beyond the Hopes of many, that heartily wished well to you. Do all that ever you can to express your grateful Sense of God's Goodness for so great a Mercy; value your Minister as a choice Gift of God to you; give him all possible Encouragement amongst you; pray much for him; attend upon his Ministry with Delight; willingly submit to his just Admonitions; readily hearken to the Counsel he gives you from the *Word of God*, for the Regulation of your Lives and Actions: *And be at Peace among your selves.*

This brings me to the last Thing in the Text; *The Duty of People one towards another*, viz. *to be at Peace among themselves*: But as I have not Time, so I hope there is not much Need to insist very largely on this *Part of the Text*. It is (as I understand) the Happiness of your Society, that

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it is a peaceful *One* : Your *Jerusalem* is as a *City*, which is *compact together* : You have been very hearty and unanimous in the Call you have given to my *Reverend Brother* ; who is now, through the good Providence of *God*, your *Pastor* ; and you live and love as *Brethren*. This is what we rejoice in, and bless *God* for, and take Pleasure in the agreeable Prospect we have of the Continuance thereof ; and that, as *God* has in a very providential Manner, brought you, and your present Minister together, so we trust, he will bless you together, and make you great Blessings and Comforts to each other now, and that you shall be each others *Joy and Crown of Rejoicing in the Day of the Lord Jesus* ; when you shall appear before that great *Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. But still, while we consider our selves as in a State of Imperfection, we must acknowledge, that Cautions and Exhortations are never out of Use, and that, even with Respect to those Duties, that through the Help of Divine Grace, we are found in the Performance of, in some good Degree at present. Suffer me therefore, in a few Words, to enforce the *Apostle's* Advice and Exhortation to the Christians at *Thessalonica*, in the Close

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of my Text ; by desiring you to consider,

1st. That the Duty exhorted to, is most strictly enjoined, most vehemently urged, and frequently inculcated in the *Scriptures*. What earnest Exhortations to Peace and Harmony, Unity and Agreement, Love and Charity, mutual Forbearance and Condescension among Christians, do we meet with in the *Epistles*? and how cogent are the Arguments and Motives, by which these Exhortations are backed and enforced? Let me mention some of those very powerful Words, whereby the *Apostles* of our Lord and Saviour, do excite and stir up Christians unto Unity and Peace. *Let us therefore follow after the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another*^b. And, Now I beseech you Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same Thing, and that there be no Divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment^c. Surely, my Beloved, all these Arguments put together, should come with such Power, and irresistible Efficacy, up-

^b Rom. xiv. 19.

^c 1 Cor. i. 10.

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on the Judgments, Consciences, and Hearts of Christians, as should perfectly *knit* them together, and effectually prevent the Rendings asunder of their Affections or Communion. Several other Precepts and Exhortations to Peace and Unity, we meet with in other *Epistles*; as in 2 Cor. xiii. 11. How plain is the Exhortation? *Live in Peace*; and how powerful the Motive, how great the Encouragement to the Performance hereof? *The God of Love and Peace shall be with you; with you*, to direct you; *with you*, to protect you; *with you*, to preserve and keep you, by his mighty Power, through Faith, to Salvation; *with you*, as the *God of Love*, to encrease your Love to him, and to each other, and to manifest his Love to you, and cause you to rejoice, with a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory; *with you*, as the *God of Peace*, to give you that *Peace* which *passeth all Understanding*, that Calmness and Quietness of Spirit, arising from a Sense of your Reconciliation with God, which none can sufficiently value. With how sweet a Vehemency does the *Apostle* exhort the *Ephesians* to Unity and Peace! *I therefore, the Prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the Vocation*

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cation wherewith ye are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in Love; endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace^d. See also with what Warmth and Fervour, with what a mighty Pathos, the Apostle urgeth and enforceth these Duties of Love and Concord upon the *Philippians*. If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind^e. What Heart, that has one Spark of the Love of Christ in it, will not yield to such an Exhortation, enforced by the Consolation of Christ, the Comfort of Love, the Fellowship of the Spirit, and Bowels of Mercy? I might also shew you, that it was the dying Charge and Command of our dear Redeemer, that his People should love one another, and live in Peace with each other. How frequently did he inculcate, how sweetly did he insinuate, how powerfully did he enforce the Precept of Love: See how he speaks, *This is my*

^d Ephes. iv. 1, 2, 3.

^e Philip. ii. 1, 2.

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Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you^f: My Commandment, which I do in a peculiar Manner enjoin, and recommend to your Observation, that ye love one another as I have loved you; and oh! how great a Love was that, with which Christ loved us, when he laid down his Life for us. So again, These Things I command you, that ye love one another^g. And, A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another^h. Thus you see, that Peace and Love among Christians is necessary, necessitate præcepti, by the Necessity of a Precept, by Vertue of many Divine Commands, Injunctions, and Exhortations. If you do not live in Love and Peace, you must live in manifest Disobedience to the Will of God, plainly revealed to you, and to the Command of God, powerfully enforced upon you.

2dly. Consider the Evil and Mischief of Strife and Discord, Quarrelling and Contention, among Christians. When those that profess Religion, grow turbulent, facti-

^f John xiii. 12.

^g Ver. 17.

^h John xiii. 34, 35.

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ous, and unpeaceable; when they are of fierce and passionate Tempers, ready to contend about every Trifle, and to give ill Language to others; when they carry it at a Distance from their Brethren, or are haughty and supercilious, and fly into a Rage, upon every slight Provocation; and when by such Means as these Divisions arise, and Mens Hearts are alienated; and their Spirits imbittered towards each other; very dismal Effects and Consequences do follow hereupon; the *Name of God* is hereby dishonour'd; the *Spirit of Christ* is grieved; mutual Edification is obstructed; the alluring Beauty of Christianity is sullied and defaced; the Glory of a Society is clouded and eclipsed; the Communion of Saints is hinder'd; the Design and End of Church Fellowship is crossed and frustrated; the Progress of the Gospel is stop'd; great Scandals are given to the World; Matter of Scorn and Triumph is afforded to the Enemies of Religion; and oh! what a Damp and Discouragement is hereby also given to the Hearts of faithful Ministers? It were easy to enlarge upon each of these particular Mischiefs, that flow from Strife and Contention among Christians; but they are
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so plain and obvious, and so sensibly taught and proved by sad and sorrowful Experience, that they need to be commented upon with *Tears*, rather than with *Words*. Oh Christians! if you would not incur the high Displeasure of Almighty God, and provoke him to withdraw his gracious Presence, and suspend the strengthening, quickening, and comforting Influences of his *Spirit*; if you would not be deprived of the Benefit of Ordinances, and have the Means of Grace, in a great Measure, useless to you; if you would not have your *Society* weaken'd and destroy'd; if you would not have the Heart of your worthy *Pastor* fail, and sink, and die within him; if you would not drive Persons from, instead of drawing them to your Communion: Then I beseech you, let not Wrath and Envy, Wranglings and Contentions, undermining and supplanting each others Reputation, Slandering and Backbiting, uncharitable Constructions and Misinterpretations of each others Words and Actions, unreasonable Aggravations of common Failings and Infirmities, &c. I say, let not these, or any of these, be ever found among you; let a froward peevish Spirit be put far from you; be clothed with Humility; esteem
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others better than your selves; be of a forgiving Temper; bear with one another's Infirmities; let your Carriage and Deportment towards all your fellow Christians; even the meanest and poorest of them, be very friendly and respectful; and let your Tongues be under the Government of the Law of Kindness; let *all Bitterness and Wrath, and Anger and Clamour, and Evil speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice; and be ye kind one to another, and ready to be reconciled to such as may have injured or offended you; and when you have Occasion to reprove any of your Brethren for their Failings (which is a Duty you ought conscientiously to perform) see that you do it wisely and prudently, at the most seasonable Time, and in the most winning, obliging Manner, without giving any railing, reviling Terms, or opprobrious Language; let not your Reproofs be joined with Reproaches, or dip'd in Gall and Satire; for this is not the Way to reduce Men from, but rather to confirm them in their Sins; those that you might make Friends to your selves, and (which is better) to Religion and their own Souls, by a wise and loving Reproof, a plain, yet friendly Admonition; those, I say, you will*

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will make Enemies to both, by bitter
Invectives and ignominious Reproaches,
which tend to exasperate rather than con-
vince or reform Offenders. Excellent is
the Advice and Direction which the Apo-
stle gives; Brethren, if a Man be over-
taken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual,
restore such an one in the Spirit of Meek-
ness; considering thy self, lest thou also be
tempted. Bear ye one another's Burdens,
and so fulfil the Law of Christ.
3dly, and lastly. Consider the great
Excellency of Peace and Unity, and
let this Consideration prevail with you
to follow after it. Peace is excellent in
it self, and excellent in its Effects; 'tis
every Way, and in all Respects, amiable
and desirable; 'tis the Beauty and Per-
fection, the Glory and Ornament, the
Strength and Safety of a Society. Hear
how the Psalmist speaks in the 133d
Psalm, throughout. Behold, how good and
how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell to-
gether in Unity. It is like the precious
Ointment upon the Head, that ran down
upon the Beard, even Aaron's Beard, that
went down to the Skirts of his Garment:
As the Dew of Hermon, and as the Dew

¹ Gal. vi. 1, 2.

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that descended upon the Mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the Blessing, even Life for evermore. Unity and Peace, and Love, are good in themselves; they are pleasing to God; they are such Things as he requires; they tend to the promoting of his Honour and Glory: And they are good to us, they greatly conduce to the Benefit and Comfort of our own Souls; they are both a pleasant and profitable Good. Next unto the Pleasure and Delight of immediate Communion with God himself, and the shedding abroad of his Love into our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost, there is none like that which ariseth from the harmonious Exercises of the Graces of the Saints, in their mutual Duties and Communions one with another (says the excellent Mr. Flavel, in his Sermon upon Gospel Unity;) how are their Spirits cheared, refreshed, and dilated hereby! what a lively Emblem is this of Heaven! the Pleasure and Advantage of Peace and Unity among Christians is not to be express'd; hereby they do strengthen each others Hands, and encourage each others Hearts; this makes their Communion together in the Worship of God, in Prayer, and hearing the Word, and receiving the Sacraments, very sweet
and

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and comfortable to them ; this is a great Encouragement to Ministers, as being a main Part of the Fruit of their painful Labours ; this allures others to join themselves to such a Society, and greatly commends Religion to the World. Oh *Christians* ! would you have the gracious Presence of *God* with you, and his Blessing upon you ? Would you have your Society thrive and flourish ? Would you have your Minister live easy and comfortable among you ? Would you taste and experience the Delights of the Christian Life ? Would you have Stability, Consistency and Increase ? Would you commend Religion and the Ways of *God* to others ? then, *be at Peace among your selves ; yea, follow Peace with all Men ;* carry it in a loving friendly Manner towards all with whom you converse ; and especially let your Hearts and Affections cleave to your fellow Christians ; and endeavour with *one Mind, and with one Mouth,* to glorify *God ;* and *let there be no Divisions among you.*

And thus I have endeavour'd to enforce the Exhortation to Peace, by representing to you the great Excellency thereof, as well as the Evil and Mischief of that Strife
and

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and Discord which is contrary thereunto; and have also given some brief Hints, which may serve as Directions for the Prevention of Division, and Preservation of Peace and Unity among Christians. I have been forced to put a great many Things together, to crowd much into a little Compass for brevity-sake, and to omit much of what would have been very proper to mention, both by Way of Motive and Direction; but I hope you will enlarge upon what has been deliver'd in short, and supply what has been wanting, in your own private Meditations; which may be as long as you please, and for which you cannot easily want Matter, where the Subject is so copious, and where *Exaltation* of the Affections is the main Thing required; for in so plain a Case, much need not be said, for the *Information* of the Judgment.

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F I N I S.

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